

## TRADE AND COMMERCE IN THE VEDIC AGE

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Contrary to the general belief that the Vedic society was pastoral and nomadic, we find it to be one of the most civilized societies of its time. *Rgveda* is agog with mercantile activities undertaken by its traders against all conceivable odds. In direct contrast to the later ages, Vedic merchants appear to enjoy social hegemony. They were the chief patrons of the poets and priests who claimed to possess miraculous powers to influence the course of events, to ward off natural calamities and afflictions caused by robbers and pirates, to ensure profit and prosperity including personal well-being and safe return of their team engineered through satiation of gods who were at their beck and call. *Indra*, the supreme Vedic deity was cast in the image of the leader of the caravans and convoys,<sup>1</sup> and his allies, the *Maruts* in those of the small traders joining the caravan or convoy.<sup>2</sup> Their social hegemony is further attested by the fact that of all the *Varnas*, it is the merchants who are stated to have been born of the *Rgveda*.<sup>3</sup> This picture of the society is so uniform and consistent throughout the *Rgveda* and *Atharvaveda* that no scholar who has ever had a close look at the Vedas could fail to notice and dare to decry it, but thanks to academic perversity compounded by Eurocentricity of our scholars that the people who, in their enthusiasm, dreamt to civilize the rest of the uncivilized world<sup>4</sup> were themselves pronounced to be pastoralist barbarians, having developed a fondness for their anti-culture, anti-urban, pastoral and barbaric way of life and outlook.

It is amazing to note that on the one hand unusual liberty was taken in interpreting lone words to suggest that the Vedic people were invaders and racially different from the original inhabitants of India, disdainfully rejecting the more sound Indian exegetists and traditions, besides anthropological data, on the other; informations of indubitable nature which recur throughout the text were

either blissfully ignored or reduced to their primeval connotations in defence of pastoralism and, when even this was not possible, attempts were made to deny the obvious. "It is absurd to resist facts where facts exist", cried MAX MULLER, but this typical absurdity has been so common that even he failed to detect that he himself stood in no better light.

We can very well appreciate the compulsions of European scholars who aspired to culturally dominate the colonized world after having militarily subjugated and economically monopolized it. They used history, geography, anthropology and even zoology as weapons of social control to establish their superiority. Many of them might have genuinely believed that the tropical world was psychotropic as well in so far as industry, valour, ingenuity and inventiveness were concerned and as such nothing worth anything could have originated in this part of the world. All that was found there was either a borrowing or prompted by direct or indirect inspiration from their European home and its neighbourhood which was the harbinger of progress and the birth centre of all the possible races. Evolutionary pattern applied to history was also partly responsible for their confusion because a civilization as high as the one reflected in the *Rgveda* was inconceivable in such a remote past, especially, as there was no archaeological material to support it. As a result, reductive interpretation of the positive features and narrowing down of the time frame were simultaneously attempted to 'properly' place the Vedic folk in time and place. These European scholars could neither be blamed for their designs nor for their self delusions, although there was little justification for the die-hard attitude after discovery of Indus sites.

True that there were exceptions to this general rule, but European scholars who had a different opinion

regarding Vedic culture and civilisation were silently ignored and their Indian counterparts who even apologetically recorded their dissent were ridiculed as 'patriotic' and 'nationalist'. This stigma had the desired effect on Indian scholars who fell in line with their mentors sooner than later. In return, their academic and extra-academic interests were promoted and protected and they became 'authorities' in their field quite often by cacophonous repetition of what had already been said and suggested by their promoters. In their endeavour to rise above national prejudices on suggested lines, they turned out to be wax copies of their mentors' voice. They took upon themselves the task of keeping the banner of colonial historiography on the top mast with queer logic. Only recently a protagonist of Vedic pastoralism and Aryan invasion came out with altruistic justifications in his defence after his thesis had been cancelled point by point and it was established that Harappan civilisation conforms perfectly and unexceptionably to Vedic descriptions. His seasoned his appeal with bits of half-truth is something which does not merit attention here.

Another scholar faithfully recounted the thesis of the former in his presidential address at the first section on ancient history of the 51<sup>st</sup> session of the Indian History Congress without any notable personal contribution and, of course, without refuting or touching upon any of the arguments advanced by this author (*Harappa Sabhyatā aur Vaidik Sahitya*, 1987) to expose the serious flaws in that thesis. Defective method and lack of patience have been largely responsible for pastoralizing and barbarizing the Vedic people. One can hardly admire and agree with a scholar who draws as far reaching a conclusion as determination of the nature of economy on the incidence of a single word but supplies wrong statistics and, over and over, does not verify as to how many times has it been used in the sense that he thinks it might have been used, nor can one check one's smile at the simplicity of another scholar who readily accepts the data along with the conclusions arrived at by the former and proceeds to decide the nature of social stratification without the least hesitation. In short, Rgvedic pastoralism is the brain child of colonial historiography, fed and fostered by careless handling of facts and figures, faulty analysis, wrong interpretations and cheap sensationalism of scholars who sitting in easy chairs have been doing a lot of easy thinking, having not enough time to read and learn from original

sources or draw insight from a work which throws a different light, or to closely scrutinize the data they have chosen to rely on, quite busy as they are in many other things. If as a compensatory move they hold as fast to their position as a sacrificial post, their compulsions can, no doubt, be appreciated; but their rhetoric of scientific enquiry and academic austerity sounds hoarse and empty, for, in that case they should have taken care to see :

1. That sea-worthy boats (*nāvah samudriyah* - I. 25. 7), boats with a hundred oars (*śata aritrām nāvam* - I. 116. 5), sea voyages (I. 116. 3. 6; VI. 62. 6) and hectic naval activities by the worshippers of Indra which recur throughout the *Rgveda* could, by no stretch of imagination, have been undertaken by a people whose main occupation was cattle-breeding.
2. That rivers in *Rgveda* have expressly been mentioned either as water routes (VI. 61. 13; VIII. 95. 1-2; X. 75. 2) or as obstruction in the land routes (III. 33. 9) and in each case mercantile intentions are clear enough.
3. That ancestors and gods have been praised for either discovering routes or making them free from obstruction (I. 83. 5; II. 23. 6; X. 14. 15).
4. There is hardly any mention of cows, goats and sheep in connection with their journeys but goods laden on *aśva* (which includes horses, ponies, mules and donkeys), bullocks and carts (*aśvayuh gavyūh rathayuh vasūyuh* - I. 51. 14) and on occasions thousands of donkeys proceeding on trade ventures (*tat rāśabho nāsatyā sahasramājā yamasya pradhane jigāya* - I. 116. 2) have a clear mention and clearer message.
5. That those whom the Vedic folk despise the most are neither civilized nor peace-loving nor wealthy with the lone exception of *paṇis* who deserve a separate treatment. They are thieves and robbers and pirates-*taskar*, *tāyu*, *muṣṭvān*, *malimlulca*, *dvayāvin*, *dasyu*, *durit*, *abhihruta*. They operate in the darkness of night or in deserted terrains as reflected by the above terms, besides *tama*, *tamovṛdha*, *kṛṣṇayoni*, *vṛka*, *māyāvin*, *tsari*. Their economic and cultural backwardness is more than evident in terms like *arūḍha*, *anapna*,—destitute, *nirāmina*—volatile or non-sedentary and *vanargu*—wild, *adhama*—mean, *mura* / *acita*—idiot. It is not the Vedic votaries who are a

threat to them but, on the contrary, it is they who tease, torment and rob the Vedic merchants as suggested by terms like *abhrñā*—those who cry hoarse, *dhvaras*, *śardha*, *bhanguravat*, *prtanyu*, *duh*, *duhsamsa*, *duhseva*, *riṣa*, etc.

6. That the journeys and voyages overland and overseas were undertaken in the course of trade (VIII. 18. 16; 31.10; 1. 167. 2). The generic term for the robbers who obstructed and tormented them in the course of their journey through hilly terrains is *Sambar*, and those who met them in the course of naval journeys is *Vrtra*.

We may go on adding such facts and features which are self-evident, but no amount of evidence and no strength of logic is likely to satisfy those who having once committed themselves to pastoralism have developed a vested interest in perpetuation of colonial historiography. Their indolence does not allow them time to see the original text or check up the context and they blindly rely on the same translated versions and casual references whose prime object was to confound in the most subtle ways. If an 'authority' on comparative linguistics points out that cognate words of Skt. *lotra* are found in several IE languages, they are quick to jump to the conclusion that the 'Aryans' were predators. They do not stop to see whether the term 'Aryan' had ever have a racial connotation. They do not see that the term *lotra* has not even once been used in the Vedas. They do not realise that like several other terms for robbers cited above this one also must have been in use, if at all, in similar contexts. There are unmistakable references of regular armies maintained by the Vedic kings and, at least, in one verse the poet speaks of the kings maintaining huge armies (*tapanti śatruṃ svarṇa bhumā mahāsenāsaḥ ameḥbhiḥ eṣām*. VII. 34. 19, which in GRIFFITH'S translation should read as, "Leading great armies, with fierce attacks of these, they burn their foes as the sun burns the earth." Except for the fact that true to the 'scientific spirit' of a colonialist, GRIFFITH translates *senā* as 'host' and *mahāsenāsaḥ* which means 'a king who maintains big army' in verbal form to confound the credulous readers. (Such deviations are found in abundance in GRIFFITH who, rendered even *samudra* as flood, but this is not the place to examine these deliberate commissions.) But they announced that there could not have been regular army in a pastoral economy and as such all the members of the tribe fought for booty. There is

clear mention of kings who extracted tax so coercively that they were despised as *janabhakṣas*, but they conclude that there could not be any regular tax collected by a chief from his tribe members—they interpret *rājā* as a tribal chief since there could not have been a king in a pastoral society—and, therefore, the term *bali* meant part of the booty paid as tribute to the chief. They lift anything from anywhere and barbarously twist and distort it to uphold the thesis of barbarism. The Vedic traders lamented about their tormentors that 'they do not respond to queries, do not respond to calls and do not agree to discuss' and prayed that 'the Mitrāvaruṇa may save the votaries from them with both their arms' (VIII. 101. 4). We may join them in their prayer and allow such scholars their carefreedom.

## II

If we look into the Vedas to find words for sale, purchase, salesman and articles of sale and purchase, we are likely to be deceived, as occurrence of such terms is not very encouraging. The term *vaṇik* occurs only on two occasions (I. 112. 11; V. 45.6). The name of *Auśija*, who has clearly been identified as a trader in I. 112. 11 occurs on nine other occasions (I. 18.1; 119.9; 122.4; 5; IV. 21.6; 7; V. 41.5; VI. 4.6; X. 99.11) and *krīṇāti* only on one (IV. 24.10). But if we take note of the various synonyms of wealth occurring both freely and in bound forms, for instance, *dhana/dhana-* (137 times), *vāja* (789 times), *vasu* (522 times), and others with high incidence such as, *maha*, *magha*, *rayi*, *bhaga*, *radha*, *dravina*, etc, besides modes of transport—boat, cart, draught animals—we are but to be dazzled by the magnitude of mercantile activities which overshadow all other economic operations. In fact, the entire *Rgveda* with very few exceptions, overtly or covertly, reverberates with trade and commerce conducted on a lofty scale.

As caravans and cargo ships have all along been targets of robbers and pirates, the merchants have not only to go in company with others but also with full preparation to meet the inevitable. Even so they felt insecure and apprehensive. In most of the prayers, they sought protection of gods : from the robbers, thieves and pirates : and in case of a confrontation, victory over them. No wonder that the very terms used for profitable ventures including caravan became synonymous with war or conflict. Had the translators, commentators and scholars taken care to

note as to which side is robbing and who is being robbed, they would not have been led to believe that the very people who are trembling with fear and uncertainty about their life and property are the villains of the piece. Had they shown the same fondness for statistics and compared the incidences of words suggesting victory (88 times) with those suggesting nervousness and cry for protection —*pā-* (268 times), *trā-* (58 times), *ava-* (429 times), *rakṣa-* (95 times, excluding those which occur for *raksasas*) etc. they would have been thrown out of balance with huge numerical pressure from the opposite side. The same would have been the result after examining and counting the various epithets used by the Vedic traders for their contenders.

In the course of their journey all the members of the caravan fought as a unit at the time of any threat or attack. References of such conflicts abound in the *RV* in which the leader of the caravan acted also as a commander. These confrontations were bound to be of a moderate scale as the caravan members or those sailing abroad could not be more than a few hundred or a few thousand. This confounded some scholars who felt that the Vedic *rājās* were, in fact, tribal chiefs and, therefore, could not maintain regular army, and the members of the tribe fought when prompted to do so. They could not visualize the situations in which these confrontations occurred nor could they differentiate these situations in which the fighters were members of the caravan as suggested by first pronominal and verbal usage, from those in which a distinct army or *senā* is engaged in a battle. They did not notice even the difference in magnitude.

But before we discuss further about the movement of the caravans, we would like to have a cursory look at the general state of economy during the Vedic and pre-Vedic days. To avoid any confusion it must be explained that by 'pre-Vedic days' we mean those incidents and developments which had already taken place earlier and by the time of writing of the oldest of the old hymns had acquired a mythical and classic form. In short, personalities such as *Angira*, *Manu*, *Uśanā*, *Dadhici*, *Śunaḥśepa*, occurrences such as providential escape of *Bhujyu* with the help of *Aśvins* from a disaster in the course of his voyage, suppression of the turbulent tribes and elimination of two of the most audacious among them, namely *Vṛtra* and *Śambara*, who had become a threat to the convoys and caravans respectively and developments such as

navigation, introduction of spoked wheels for carts and chariots, besides metal forging had already taken place, and search for safe routes and promising mineral areas and market centers had already begun in the pre-Vedic days. This information is likely to shock so many of us who have been hiding the discrepancies in their thesis behind Old and New books, for we have strong reason to submit that there is no perceptible transformation, nay, not even significant qualitative change in the nature of economy and social occupations, right from the stage immediately preceding the composition of the extant *Rgveda* to the time of the 'New Books' or *maṇḍalas*.

This raises a very serious question as to why we find no literary or liturgical record from pre-Vedic stage which is broadly comparable to the Vedic age? The answer is simple. The writing system had not improved enough to faithfully record verbal statements during the said stage and therefore events and developments pertaining to that had been handed down to posterity through word of mouth with inevitable exaggerations but that was all the knowledge available to the composers of the verses which they keep repeating in their verses *ad nauseam*. This also explains why the Vedas were called 'the Vedas' or knowledge and *śruti*, that is, 'knowledge acquired through words of mouth' besides explaining the belief that the Vedas were created at the beginning of creation and even the Creator had to have 'the knowledge' to enable him to create.

To exemplify our statement regarding economy, let us have a look at the *Bhujyu* episode which recurs in both Old and New Books (I. 33. 15; 112. 6; 20; 116. 3-5; 117. 14; 15; 118. 6; 119. 4; VI. 20. 8; 26. 4; 62. 6; VII. 68. 7; 69. 7; VIII. 22. 2; 46. 20; X. 40. 7; etc.) as an event which had taken place sometime in the past and had by then acquired the character of a legend. Its description available in I. 116. 3-5 is more informative than others, but in perfect agreement with other accounts except one minor variation in case of the number of boats forming the fleet ascribed to *Aśvins*. In GRIFFITH's translation the verses are as below :

"Yes, *Aśvins*, as a dead man leaves his riches, *Tugra* left *Bhujyu* in the cloud of waters,

You brought him back in animated vessels, traversing air, unvetted by the billows.

*Bhujyu* with winged things, *Nāsatyas*, which for three



nights, three days full swiftly travelled,  
To seas farther shore, the stand of ocean, in three cars,  
hundred footed, with six horses.

Ye wrought that hero exploit in the ocean which giveth  
no support, or hold, or station,

What time ye carried Bhujū to his dwelling, borne in a  
ship with hundred oars, O Asvins."

There are apparent incongruities in GRIFFITH's rendering. (He translates *ātmanvati nau*—self-propelled boat or acc. Sāyaṇa 'his own boat' as 'animated vessel', *uda megha*—cloud generating (sea) as 'cloud of waters', *antarikṣa prut*—floating on the ocean (Sāyaṇa renders it 'as if floating in sky' due to the fact that the vessel is held above water) as 'traversing air', *ap udaka*—keeping off water (not permitting seepage) as 'unwetted by the billows' and so on.) But despite this even he admits that it was a sea voyage, in which a fleet of three boats was involved. The fleet was driven by hundred oars and each boat was equipped with two sails—a feature because of which sail-driven boats have figuratively been described as birds (*pataṅga* - I. 116. 4; *pakṣi* - I. 182. 5; *patatri* - VI. 62. 6; VII. 69. 7; X. 143. 5).

Although R̥gvedic India did have a rich cattle wealth and developed agriculture in the pre-Vedic days itself, it had taken a jump to the next stage of development, i. e. industry and trade and hegemonistic role in the society was being played by the newly emerged force, rather than the peasants and cattle breeders. Pastoralist historians failed to note that the terms which had been coined at some anterior stage had acquired new connotations and even *gopā*, literally speaking, herdboys, *gopati* - master of herds, *go-īṣṭi* and *go-eṣaṇa* - craze for cattle, *goṣṭha* - enclosure for cattle, *gotra* - cow pen and *vṛjana* - pasture had shed off their pastoral colouring. Many of these terms, such as *goswāmī*, *goṣṭhi*, *gaveṣaṇa*, *gotra* are still in use. Even the term *go* was being used in various senses, such as, speech, wealth, dawn, cattle, sun rays, streams, milk, hide, mineral wealth, standard of measurement, sense organs and in some cases even a horse. Under contextual pressure, scholars had to recognise these connotations but even so the very next moment they struggled it off for their love of pastoralism.

The clients of the R̥gvedic poets and priests were interested in cattle not as cowboys but as owners, consumers and dealers. The last aspect is more notable as

we find that the term *dugdha* is missing in the RV while *ghṛta* which could be stored, transported to distant places and yield better return occurs regularly in various contexts. Even *duh* in its verbal forms occurs only in contexts not related to milch-animals. There is not a single description of pastures or grazing with passion, fervor or involvement that we find in case of agriculture, crafts, caravan and craze for wealth. Of the pastoral products it is neither milk nor meat (*māṁsa* and *kraviṣ* both occur only in one hymn, I. 162 in connection with horse sacrifice). *Māṁsa* does not figure anywhere else and *kraviṣ* - raw meat and *kravyad* in relation to their enemies, as in X. 87. 2; 5; 16; 19, and VII. 104. 2 or the funeral fire, as in X. 16), but hide (*carma* - I. 85. 5; 110. 8; 161. 7; III. 5. 6; 60. 2; IV. 5. 7; 36. 4; V. 85. 1; VI. 8. 3; VII. 63. 1; VIII. 5. 38; 6. 5; 55. 3) and wool (*roma* I. 126. 7; IX. 97. 11; *vara* - IX. 1. 6; 6. 1; 13. 6 etc; and *ūrṇā* - IV. 22. 2; V. 52. 9; VI. 15. 16 etc.) and, of course, *ghṛta* a commodity of merchandise (240 times). The reason is not far to seek.

Agriculture was no less advanced. We do not agree with the scholars who disclaim existence of advanced agriculture in early Vedic stage on the basis that references to agriculture occur only in Books IV and X, both of late origin, nor with those who suggest that they cultivated only barley. With slightly improved vision they could find testimony of agriculture scattered over the entire RV. (I. 23. 15; 117. 21; II. 5. 6; 21. 1; III. 42. 7; 52. 1; IV. 41. 6; 57. 38. 1; V. 33. 4; 53. 13; VI. 13. 4; 25. 4; VII. 3. 4; VIII. 21. 3; 22. 6; 91. 5-6; IX. 69. 8; X. 34. 13; 49. 7; 101. 3 etc.) We feel dismayed to see that subjective elements have been introduced to play down agricultural operations. For instance, there is no reason to suppose that the plough-share in Vedic times was made of wood. As it has been mentioned separately it must have been a detachable part which implies it to have been metallic.

It must not be forgotten that the term *Ārya* at an earlier stage meant agriculturist and those who felt superior to others because of being agriculturists must have been pioneers in their region. It is as unreasonable to assess the range and extent of agriculture on the basis of direct accounts of agricultural operation as to assess the magnitude of cattle wealth by direct evidence of grazing and pasture. Nothing less than the total milieu can present a clear picture of the various developments and in that case preponderance of evidence can astound even those

who have been applying double criteria for accepting or rejecting singular aspects.

Vedic peasants were not only using ploughs with metal share and using animal power to drive their carts and ploughs, but also using various techniques and sources for irrigation. This, in turn, implies that cultivation was not limited to river valleys only, but the entire plain, as far as it could be cleared, was available to them for cultivation. Besides they were taking two crops a year, for their prayers and sacrifices for rain could have not much relevance in case of winter crop. It appears that some sort of share cropping had already come in vogue. In case of peasants or *kīnāśas* (IV. 57. 8) use of third person, in contrast to aspirations of getting all the riches of all the world for themselves and their personal involvement in mercantile operations sets the two distinctly apart. Besides, there were *dāśas* or serfs who might have been employed by the masters.

In short, it was the surplus generated through cattle breeding and two-crop cultivation over a vast area stretching from Indus to Gaṅgā with use of serf and slave labour (cf., *dāśapravarga* - I. 92. 8; *bhārabhṛt* 75. 12) cattle power and developed tools and implements that resulted into demand for the best and abundant in every conceivable field and boosted craft and trade. But nevertheless, the poets and clients of *RV* appear to be indifferent to agriculture as well in so far as their participation or keen interest in agricultural operations is concerned.

The state of craft and industry is somewhat different. True that merchants stood only as promoters and dealers of objects of crafts and craftsmen. Although there is mention of *Brāhmaṇa* (I. 15. 5; II. 36. 5; VI. 75. 10; VII. 103. 7), *Kṣatriya* (IV. 42. 1; V. 69. 1; VIII. 25. 8), *Viśa* (I. 25. 1; II. 1. 8; III. 6. 3; IV. 2. 3) *Vanik* (I. 112. 11; V. 45. 6) besides two categories of *Ārya* and *Dāśa*, some scholars believe that there was no division of labour and *Varṇa* formation in the *RV*. They rely on hymn X. 112. 2 for their contention, and as according to them the whole of Book IX is new, they conclude that as late as that there was no social stratification and any one could choose any profession for his livelihood and practitioners of more than one profession could be found in one and the same family.

Numerous simplistic and mutually exclusive pleas

have simultaneously been available to many scholars. The fact is that at least Book IX is thematic in nature and it must be kept out of Old-New tangle, as the compiler collected all the hymns old and new and coalesced them together in a separate Book. Some of the hymns compiled in Book IX come from memorial past i. e. *Śruti* period. That is one reason why Book IX is the only book in which hymns ascribed to *Uśana*, who had become a mythical figure even for the poets of Old Books (c. f. IV. 16. 2; V. 29. 9; VI. 20. 11; VIII. 7. 26) are to be found. Commenting on IX. 112 GRIFFITH writes, "The hymn appears to be an old popular song transformed into an address to Soma by attaching to each stanza a refrain which has no connection with the subject of the song." Even otherwise, if Old Books clearly mention social division which is negated by a hymn falling in supposedly a New Book, the very foundation of old and new is demolished. We, therefore, hold this hymn to be an old one, predating written composition and appropriated by, or wrongly ascribed to, another poet, as it reflects social conditions of an anterior stage. Even so, it admits division of labour as is clear in the statement *nānānam vā u no dhiyo vi vratāni janānām* (IX. 112. 1) and reference to specialisations, such as *taṣṣa* - carpenter; *Brahma* - priest; *kārmār* - smith; *kāru* - versifier; *bhiṣak* - physician (GRIFFITH renders it as leech; *Sāyana* as presiding priest - *yajñasya Brahmā*), *upalaprakṣiṇi* - corn parcher. But what is more interesting is that it mentions free sale by artisans to prospective customers; *kārmāra* wishes to get a rich customer - *kārmāro hiranyavantam icchati*.

Division of labour and specialization of craft is further attested in frequent mention of *pañcajanāḥ* and *pañcakṛṣṭi* which have been problematic in the sense that no translator or commentator ever grasped as to which five people are meant in these contexts. Writes LEHMANN (*Indo-European and Indo-Europeans*. 1970/7) "In other Indo-European languages there are tantalising references to groups of five. The most ancient of these is in the Hittite laws, where five sets of artisans are named : carpenters, blacksmiths, weavers, leather-workers and tillers." Whether Hittite laws are older than *Rgveda* or not is subject to dispute, but there can not be dispute about five subdivisions of professionals as suggested by *pañcajanāḥ* (I. 89. 10; VI. 11. 4; 51. 11) and *pañcakṛṣṭi* (II. 2. 10; IV. 38. 10; VI. 46. 7).

The problem is as to why only five professions

were given so much importance that they were set as a class apart? We know that pottery of various shapes and sizes (*kumbha* : pitcher I. 116. 7; VII. 33. 13; *kalaśa* : water vessel I. 117. 12; III. 32. 15; VI. 47. 6, 69.6; *droṇa* : vat or tank for boiling *soma* juice, etc., : VI. 44. 20, IX. 3. 1, X. 44. 4; *kośa*; storage jar; I. 135. 2, III. 32. 15; IV. 16-17, V. 53. 6) TP; *ukha* (cauldron) - I. 162. 13; 15; III. 53. 22; *camu* - (cup) I. 14. 4; III. 48. 4; V. 51. 4; VI. 57. 2; *camas*, ladle - I. 20. 6; IV. 33.5; X. 16. 8; *graha* (goblet - X. 114. 5) was being used but there is no mention of a potter. We know that there were barbers to shave the beard and head, but *vaptā* is referred only once by way of a simile (X. 142.4). So is the case with other professions of general nature, such as, *hiranyakāra*, *maṇikāra*, *niśāda*, *sthapati*, etc., all of which called for precision and professionalism and are mentioned in *Yajurveda* (XVI and XXX) but are presupposed in *RV*, because of the presence of the items and functions involved. As such we are left with the only inference that special status was granted, and special mention as *pañcajanāḥ*, *pañcakṛṣṭi* was made, only to those professionals who had singular importance in production of commodities for sale. This fact is again a testimony of the commercial spirit of the age.

Qualitatively, Vedic artisans had reached a perfection which astonished their domestic clients as well. Like *pañcajanāḥ* the four brothers - *Rbhu*, *Rbhukṣaṇa*, *Vaja* and *Bibhva* - whose achievements are lauded in hyperbole, appear to be representing four different professionals and among them excelled each other. Thus we find miracles being performed in the field of carving/casting/sculpture (?) (*niścarmāṇā Rbhavaḥ gām apinśat sam vatsena asrjātā mātaram punaḥ* - I. 110. 8; cf. 161. 9; III. 60. 2; IV. 33. 4; X. 68. 11; etc. which in GRIFFITH's rendering reads as "out of skin, O Rbhus, once ye formed a cow and brought the mother close unto her calf." We have better reason to translate it as, 'O Rbhus, ye formed *gau* sans skin and again created the mother out of the calf.' In GRIFFITH's rendering it becomes at the most a case of careful skinning and stuffing, but if we take note of the Indus seals and remember that the term *go* was not only used for bulls but also for entire animal world besides speech, we shall be able to see that *niścarma go* (motifs on seals), *vatsa* (inscribed signs) and mother or cow (speech) convey a different message which could not be visualised by GRIFFITH (in absence of any material support),

carpentry (*takṣat ratham suvrtam pīdmanapasah* - I. 111. 1; etc.), smithy (*jyeṣṭha āha camasā dvā kareti kanlyān trīn kṛnavām iti āha, kaniṣṭhah āha caturaskareti tvaṣṭa Rbhavaḥ tat panayat vaco vah*. IV. 33. 5. Forging more than one item from the same material content is possible in case of metals only, cf. I. 20. 6 which in GRIFFITH's translation reads as "The sacrificial ladle, wrought newly by the God *Tvaṣṭra*'s hand / four ladles have ye made thereof.", and a discipline which credits them with rejuvenating their father who had grown old (but compare, *tarāṇtvā ye pituḥ asya saścire* - I. 110. 6; *punar ye cakruḥ pitarā yuvānā sanā yūpeva jaranā sayānā* IV. 33. 3) and suggests miraculous achievement in the field of medicine.

*Aśvins* have also not only been credited with this feat (I. 117. 13; V. 74. 5; VII. 71. 5) but in a number of verses identified with *Rbhus* (I. 20. 3; IV. 34. 9). In their case also we find liberal ovations being paid to them for their excellence.

Excellence in weaving is attested in many ways, including identification of *Pūṣan* as *vāsoṇāya* (X. 26. 6).

However, apart from these descriptions of suggestive nature, we have specific evidence of excellence in various fields. We find carts and chariots with spoked wheels, nave and axle, in some cases equipped with hood for protection against sun and rain; seaworthy boats equipped with oars and sails; ploughs with detachable yoke and share. These achievements are attested right from the oldest portions of the *RV*. There is evidence of handloom being used for weaving (VI. 9. 2-3). Manufacture of these items called for high degree of mastery and specialisation in each branch of carpentry.

*R̥gvedic* society was as yet at Chalcolithic stage of development. Tools and weapons were made either of *aśma* - stone (VII. 75. 15; X. 101. 10) or *ayas* bronze or copper (I. 121. 9; IV. 2. 17; VI. 75. 15); but for small tools and tips of arrows, flint, bone, horn, etc. were also used. The bolt of *Indra* is made of flint as the very name *vajra* suggests. He is also called *adriva* (I. 10. 7; 11. 5; X. 147. 1), as *vajrahasta* (I. 173. 10; II. 11. 13). The term *śilmukha* for arrows continued to be used even after flint or *śilā* became obsolete. In some weapons, as in the case of mace, metal and stone both were used according to convenience or status. In some cases metal head bands (IV. 37. 4; VIII. 101. 3) and breast sheets (I. 25. 13) could

also have been used. Manufacture of these tools and weapons, especially, *śataparva vajra* - spiked mace (I. 80. 6; VIII. 6. 6; 76. 2) whether of flint or of bronze must have been a very specialised job. One need not ask for any more evidence to satisfy that metal workers and stone carvers had a specialised area and a wholetime job.

Not only Vedic women, but affluent men as well, were very fond of ornaments. Some of these were definitely made of gold, silver and semi-precious stones evident from terms like *niṣkagrīva* (V. 19. 3), *candrāṇi* (IX. 69. 10), *maṇigrīva* (I. 122. 14) and *ratnavanta* (III. 28. 5). The ornaments mentioned in various contexts are : *karnaśobhana* - ear-ring (VIII. 78. 3); necklaces of more than one type, i. e. *niṣka*, *maṇi* (op. cit.) *sraja* (IV. 38. 6; V. 53. 4) *rukma* (V. 54. 11; VI. 56. 13); anklets and bangles or *khādi* (V. 54. 11; VII. 56. 13; V. 58. 2), headband or *śīra* (V. 54. 11). If we compare these descriptions with Harappan jewellery, we shall find striking similarity between the two. We may only visualise the level of competence involved and, as stated earlier, feel satisfied that not only the goldsmiths but also the *Maṇikāras* must have had a good business.

Leather-workers made, among other things, leather containers for storing and transporting precious liquids such as wine, *Soma*, (I. 191. 10; IV. 45. 1; VI. 48. 18; VIII. 5. 19) and lifting water from wells (V. 83. 7); blowers for generating high temperature for melting metals and fabricating tools and implements (VII. 89. 2).

Weaving and spinning appear to be the most absorbing business after agriculture and domestic work. Both ladies and gents filled their vacancy by the handy and useful diversion of spinning but weaving was a serious and specialised job even though ladies had their own device for weaving (knitting?) clothes for children (V. 47. 6). Words derived from *tan* - to extend, spin, not only abound in the *RV* but some of its derivatives had formed nucleus to generate peripheral terminology which suggests that spinning and weaving had not only been an old but also a popular avocation transcending class, sex and caste barriers.

Although *tantra* - loom, occurs only once (X. 71. 9), references of weaving or *vayan* with an emotional tinge are found both in the old and new portions of *RV* (II. 28. 5 "... Let not my thread, while I weave song, be swerved, not my works sum, before the time, be shattered."

GRIFFITH)

*Tantu* - filament, fibre and *raśmi* - string, cord are the two words which stand for thread in *RV*. It is likely that the former stood for cotton thread as *tānta* in Bengali, and *raśmi* (cf. I. 28. 4; 144. 3; VI. 75. 6), from which Hindi *raśi* has been derived, was used for ropes and strings and woollen threads. *Tantra* - loom, could be used efficiently for weaving cotton and silk only as woollen thread could not be managed on spindle if twisted beyond a limit, and even so it remains rough as starch used for cotton is not applicable to it without which a loom could not work as shuttle needs smooth, properly and evenly stretched warp threads to move with the thread of the woof. But there is more reliable information in other contexts which further substantiate our thesis. In a hymn addressed to *Vāyu* the poet gives a graphic account of kindling fire by women by waving the extended portion of their garment used as veil by pressing one side under their elbow and holding the other in their hands which they do even today, and the gentle wind blowing in the morning with rays of the dawn shooting across the sky creating an illusion of an extended garment (*Tubhyam-uśāṣaḥ śucayāḥ parāvati bhadrā vastrā tanvate dansu raśmiṣu, citrā navyeṣu raśmiṣu* - I. 134. 4. GRIFFITH fails to capture the entire depth and beauty of this verse but even so he renders it as "The radiant Dawns in the far distant sky broden their lovely garments forth in wondrous beams, bright coloured in their new born beams." It is unconceivable that such an exercise was possible with woollen long cloth. Curiously enough it also suggests that ladies wore their *saries* in *Rgvedic* times much as they do even today. In another verse it is indicated that even ladies were engaged in weaving : "Good work for us, the glorious Night and Morning, like female weavers, waxen from aforetime. Yielders of rich milk, interweave in concert, the long extended thread, the web of worship." (II. 3. 6). Had there not been other verses (VI. 9. 2-3; VII. 33. 9; X. 26. 6; 130. 1) one could be led to simplistic belief that weaving was not a regular profession but an avocation of women.

While there has never been any dispute regarding spinning and weaving, scholars have labouriously contended that there is no mention of cotton in the *RV*, whereas wool has been mentioned specifically and, therefore, Vedic Aryans were neither acquainted with nor manufactured or wore any cloth other than a woollen one.



To our dismay we find that out of a total of seven references of wool not even once does *ūrṇa/ūrṇā* occur in relation to clothing, weaving or spinning. As we have seen, it is not *ūrṇā* but *raśmi* which stands for thread or string spun from wool which also suggests that rugs, sheets and blankets were manufactured from wool rather than cloth.

If we compare the state of economy in general and industry and workmanship in particular, as reflected in the *R̥gveda* and compare it with corresponding developments in other civilizations of the ancient world, it stands inferior to none and, in certain respects, somewhat ahead of others. One notable feature of this economy is surplus production which apparently was meant for export. Quite natural that in hymns addressed to *Pūṣan*, *R̥bhus* and *Aśvins* it is, time and again, emphasised that they are instrumental in bringing prosperity to the Vedic clients :

*Pūṣan - Adhā no viśvasaubhaga hiranyavāṣimattama  
Dhanāni suṣaṇā kridhi.  
Śagdhī pūrdhī prayansi ca śiṣṭhi prāsyudaram.  
Pūṣanniha kratum vidāḥ.  
Na Pūṣaṇam methāmasi sūktairabhi gr̥ṇīmasi.  
Vasūni-dasmamīmahe. I. 42: 6; 9; 10.*

GRIFFITH'S rendering : "So, Lord of all prosperity, best wielder of the golden sword, make riches easy to be won... Be gracious to us, fill us full, give us, and invigorate : O Pūṣan find your power for this. No blame have we for Pūṣan; him we magnify with songs of praise : We seek the Mighty one for wealth."

*R̥bhus - Ratham ye cakruḥ suvṛtam nareṣṭhām ye dhenum  
viśvajuvam viśvarūpām.*

*Ta ā takṣat R̥bhavaḥ rayīm naḥ svavasah  
svapasah suhastāḥ IV. 33. 8.*

*Ā vājā yātopa na R̥bhukṣā maho nara dravinaso  
gr̥ṇānāḥ. IV. 34. 5*

*Yat tritīyam savanam ratnadheyam akṛṇudhvam  
svapasyā suhastāḥ. Tat R̥bhavaḥ pariṣiktam vā  
etat sam madebhiḥ ... IV. 35. 9.*

"They who formed the swift car, bearing heroes, and the Cow omniform and all impelling, Even may they form wealth for us,—the *R̥bhus*, dexterous handed, deft in work and gracious... Come to us Heroes, *Vājas* and *R̥bhukṣans*, glorified for the sake of mighty treasure....The third libation, that bestoweth treasure, which ye have won by skill, ye dexterous handed..."

In brief, the goods produced by the artisans were,

in the eyes of the Vedic clients, extremely outstanding and were not only sources of earning to the artisans but also the clients, which plainly suggests that these were intended for sale.

### III

Those who have been demanding inventories of items of sale and purchase and rate of interest and contracts of partnership did not realise that had such information been available in any hymn they would themselves declare it to be an interpolation, highly at variance as this piece of information would have been with the general spirit of the text in question. This itself proves as to how unreasonable have scholars been in their demand for direct and precise evidence. A few lessons in textual criticism and aesthetic appreciation could have done a lot of good to scholars with qualified vision. However, as there are ways and ways of un-seeing things, so are there a few sure ways of seeing and identifying what we are looking for.

The Vedic society was using certain items which were not available in the Indo-Gangetic plain. Such items are : gold, silver, semiprecious stones, horses of fine breed, bitumen for making the boats leakproof or *acchidra*, although for copper they could depend on *Khetri* in Rajasthan. One thing is clear that they had to procure such items through some trade network from the countries of their origin. There is only one thing to be decided and that is initiative.

The Vedic *Viśas* in general and their symbolic representatives *Marut* are not only seen everywhere in a hurry to reach some far off place in search of wealth and profit, but they treat all physical obstacles with disdain—*Na parvatā na nadyo varanta vaḥ yatra acidhvam Marutaḥ gacchathā tat / Uta dyāvāprthivī yāthanā pari subham yātām anu rathā avṛtsat // V. 55. 7*—"Neither the mountains nor the rivers keep you back; whither ye have resolved thither ye, *Maruts* go. Ye compass round about even the heaven and earth, their cars moved onwards as they went to victory." 'Victory' is GRIFFITH'S invention, but the message is clear. We have hymns and hymns with the same import.

But more important than their journey is their outfit, their singular accomplishment and their lifestyle. They are shown mounting horses ("O Heroes lordliest of all, who are ye that have singly come forth from a region

most remote. Where are your horses, where the reins? how come ye? how had ye the power? Rein was on nose and seat on back. The whip is laid upon the flank. The heroes stretch their thighs apart, like women when babe is born." V. 61. 1-3) and chariots in order to earn profit, (*Ā Rudrāsa Indravantaḥ sajopasaḥ hiraṇyavantaḥ suvitāya gantana* - V. 57. 1) which some scholars rashly mistook for booty. "Armed with your daggers, full of wisdom, armed with spears, armed with your quivers, armed with arrows, with good bows / Good horses and good cars have ye, O Pṛṣṇi's Sons : ye, Maruts, with good weapons go to victory." (V. 57. 2) Again we may point out the subjective element introduced by the translator because there is no term used in this verse to suggest victory. At least *subham* is not to be translated as victory. The purpose of the journey is to be inferred from the very next stanza, and according to the translator himself, "From hills and heaven ye shake wealth for the worshipper". (V. 57. 3) One more improvement is needed to grasp the import of the said verse : *vaṣi*, *r̥ṣi* are not weapons but tools. There is one more tool with which the *Maruts* are stated to be equipped : sharp blades attached or welded to the mace or hammer (*anṣeṣu etāḥ pavīṣu kṣurā adhi* - I. 166. 10). Their fondness for women, fun and drink, "as they gleam and sing, gathered in troop, rejoicing drink, the Soma juice" (V. 60. 8) reminiscent of mariners' way of life cannot be appreciated unless we visualize the long spells of monotony and drudgery in their life.

However, the most unique feature of their activities is their active participation in mining operations. The tools that we have witnessed above are best suited to mining and digging. In fact they are "wild boars rushing about with tusks of iron" (I. 89. 5) provided we know that *ayas* in the Vedic times could mean any other metal but iron. There are verses in the *RV* which suggest that the Vedic merchants had direct access to minerally pregnant areas of Afghanistan, Iran and South Central Asia but to avoid further diversion, it would be better to have a glance at the graphic depiction of mining activities as reflected in two verses :

"Say where, then, is this mighty region's farthest bound, where, Maruts, is the lowest depth that ye have reached,

"When ye cast down like chaff the firmly established pile, ..." I. 168. 6

"Earth, like a bounteous lady, liberal of her gifts, struck down and shaken, yet exultant comes to us,

"Impetuous as a bear, O Maruts, is your rush, terrible as a dreadful bull." (V. 56. 3)

So close is the association of *Maruts* with mining and metals that one of the synonyms of *hiranya* is *Marut* itself (*Nighaṇṭu*, 1. 2). Incidentally it may be submitted that *hiranya* in *RV* is not gold but metal of any kind—'that which is sought after'—and that is one reason why we find *vaṣis* etc. made of *hiranya* on the one hand and *ayas*, *rukma*, *loha*, etc. as synonyms of *hiranya* on the other. (*Nigh.* 1. 2)

So, as far as the import items are concerned, we are on a solid footing in asserting that the visible items of import consisted mainly of minerals and metals and the Vedic Indians had a hegemonistic role to play in the entire region, east of Iran and north of Soviet Central Asia, as they had direct access to the mineral sources, even though we can not be as sure about their precise access to specific mineral areas on which they held monopoly or the minerals that they got in exchange. In case of horses, we have information that the *Gandharvas* or people of *Gandhāra* monopolized the trade and sold them either to their Indian counterparts or the customers themselves as evident from *RV*. (I. 163. 2). Regarding invisible items of import which could have included dry fruit, sheep of fine breed, we have information of very general nature, as reflected in their desire for the choicest and the best (*svadharman devāvitaye śreṣṭham no dhehi vāryam* - I. 21. 2 etc. or desire for food which is *sprha*, *purusprha*, *śreṣṭha* etc.) in case of fruit and a hint as to the origin of sheep which is ascribed to northerly quarters besides an oblique reference to *Gandhāri* sheep (I. 126. 7) suggesting that it was considered rich in wool. In any case, this information is crucial as far as determination of import of sheep is concerned.

Items of export have again to be gleaned from the various items domestically produced on a large scale. Some of these must have been mainly for export, such as woollen fabrics as they had only a limited market in a tropical climate. According to *Nirukta*, *Kambojas* derived their name as they were the prime consumers of *Kambala* or woollen products—*kambojāḥ kambalabhajāḥ* (II. 4) . *Gandhāra* and *Kamboja*, being areas of operation of the

Vedic explorers and miners, must have been receiving bulk supply of woollens from India and that may be one reason why wool and sheep find special mention in *RV*. Cotton cloths were produced not only on a large scale but of a very fine quality looking at the contemporary world. There must have been some customers in other countries as they were already there in the domestic market.

India is rich in timber of good quality needed for building ships, boats, carts, bridges of modest scale and houses. Ships, boats and carts were not only produced but the carpenters were doing enviable job in their areas of specialization. Some of these must have got a market abroad, beside timber itself. In *Rgveda* references of felling trees on a large scale are found frequently. It served double purpose of clearing the land which prompted not only felling (I. 130. 4; 6. 2. 9) but burning also (I. 65. 4; V. 9. 4; VI. 6. 1), and domestic use of timber as well as sale for profit which was possible only in case of export, as there must have been abundant wood in the homeland to be cut and used by any one who wished it. Incidentally carriage of timber was the easiest, once it was piled and neatly tied into a huge float in the upper reaches of a river before the onset of monsoon when it could be skilfully directed to sea and thence to any distance with the manoeuvres needed for normal navigation. Of all the commodities of export, it is timber alone which has been mentioned in a formula for eradication of poverty (*Ado yaddāru plavate sindhoḥ pāre apūruṣam / Tadā rabhasva durhaṇo tena gaccha parastaram.* - X. 155. 3).

We have been witnessing too much of clamour about cow-wealth and cow as the only form of wealth, but little was it realised that useful beasts have also been a commodity of sale and purchase, as horse has, indisputably, been. Cow, being such a useful animal as a source of milk, meat, valuable hide and draught animal, i. e. bullock, has ever been in great demand in countries having a wide range of climatic variation. With a clear perspective about the Vedic economy it should have been easily understood that cow and bulls might have been an item of export. We are tempted to suggest that more than cows the bulls could have been in demand in the countries and climates not much favourable to cows where breed deteriorated after only a few generations, as in Mesopotamia. Apart from cattle, camels with double hump which enjoyed VIP status among their kind in Arabia and Iraq till yesterday, were imported in those countries from Sindh. We find

*Pūṣan* to have been lauded for his ability to save the votaries from the ill-intending enemies as a camel (I. 138. 2) and camels mentioned as animals of special significance and figure among animals listed in *dānastutis*. What could be donated could be sold and bartered as well. What is important for us is their astounding number (*śatam ūṣṭrāṇām dadat* - VIII. 5. 37; *ūṣṭrāṇām viṣṭati śatā* - VIII. 46. 22; *śatamuṣṭra acikradat* - VIII. 46. 31). As these references occur in avowedly New Books, those who are more particular about New and Old may raise their eyebrows but we hope they shall not suggest that pastoralists of Old Books had shifted from cow herding to camel breeding although we are ready to accept that with growing trade with West Asia and a shift in urban centres in India towards Indus from that of Sarasvatī, the ship of desert might have acquired prominence and created a market abroad as well. And if camel comes, can donkey be far behind. We have already referred to donkeys, thousands in number, driven as part of a caravan (*Tad rāsabho Nāsatyā sahasramājā yamasya pradhane jigāya* - I. 116. 2). It may be pertinent to mention here that during the Vedic age and even much afterwards, the donkey was not as despised an animal as it was allowed to be through neglect after mass-scale import of steppe horses and development of Indus breed in the course of time. It had the honour of being the favourite animal of *Aśvins* (VIII. 85. 7) and has been adulated even in *aśvasūkta* (I. 162. 21) besides, at least once, being mentioned as carrier of Indra's car (3. 53. 5).

Among other commodities of sale, one, definitely, was *Soma* which we identify as sugarcane and its products, molasses, cakes which were transported in leather containers or *dṛti* (*dṛtisturtyo madhuno vi rapṣate* - IV. 45. 1; *Madhvaḥ pibatam madhupebhiḥ āsabhiḥ uta priyam madhune yuñjāthām rathe, Ā vartanim madhunā jinvathaspatho dṛtim vahethe madhumantam aśvinā*. IV. 45. 3). No wonder that they aspired to win all the wealth of all kinds with *Soma* on their side (IX. 63. 12; 30; 64. 6; 65. 2; 17; 87. 4; 100. 3). Another item prepared from *Soma* (?) was liquor or *surā*, kept and carried in leather containers (I. 191. 10) as well as earthen jars (I. 116. 7).

Cosmetics (VII. 55. 8), collyrium (VI. 63. 3; X. 146. 6) appear to be in fashion and even if prepared by the ladies in their homes for personal use, the idea must have caught the attention of traders interested in export.

Foodgrains, especially rice, which is described

as a favourite item for preparation of pudding (*kṣīrapākodana* - VIII. 77. 10) could have been procured by the Vedic folk from easterly regions and having special significance, it could also have been one of the cereals chosen for export as well.

Among other items, one could be ivory as suggested by the term *ibha* (I. 8. 17; IV. 4. 1; VI. 20. 8) which became obsolete in later times but whose transfer to western Asia and thence to Europe. *Ibna-ivory* is reminiscent of its export value.

Some of the items imported or procured from other areas could have also been partly exported to other countries, such as copper, semi-precious stones, ornaments and artifacts made of bronze, silver, gold, semiprecious stones and beads could have been in demand in some countries of their contact. Likewise, roots and herbs useful for flavouring food or improving the taste or for medicines and unguents. Reality is always more complex than appearance.

In dealing with the items of sale and purchase, we have mainly been concerned with imports and exports. It does not mean that there was no perceptible market inside the country. On the contrary, import and export on such a vast scale was almost impossible without a developed inland trade network and market centres. Domestic market must have been only many times larger than the foreign one but it had to deal in all the items figuring in the inventory of imports and exports besides many more items of seasonal or regional or marginal importance.

Looking at the stage of development, it is easy to infer that barter must have been the common practice, but a society in which gold and silver have not only been identified but the importance attached to the yellow metal is also remarkable, transactions through these metals must have been operated at conceivable levels. The craze for gold, the most useless metal of all, and the desire for acquiring such an immense wealth that it may last forever, is possible only with gold- and silver-related economy. In ancient world, prior to the advent of marked pieces of various metals with various denominations, chips of these metals of standard size and weight and defined standard of purity, each of which aspect had to be checked at every transaction, had come in vogue. In *Rgveda* we do not only find references of chips of gold or *hiranyapiṇḍas* (VI. 47. 23) but we find their name as well, for there is nothing to

refute that the *niṣkas* worn as pendants (I. 126. 2; II. 33. 10; V. 19. 3; VIII. 47. 15) were not of gold or not of standard size or not in currency. On the contrary, we know that *niṣka* was the name of the golden currency in historical times.

About prevalence of silver, it was suggested that it must have been rare as the term *rajatam* occurs only once (VIII. 25. 22). We feel only amused at the queer statistical logic which was forgotten when on the basis of lone occurrence and lame interpretation of the term *anāsa* an entire population was declared to be snubnosed. However, there is yet another term for silver in the *Rgveda*, *candra*, which has been mistaken by commentators and translators alike despite the fact that *Nighantu* mentions it as a metal and the term *cāndī* and *candrahāra*—ornament in which silver coins were appended to a thread to form a necklace (cf. *moharamālā* = *niṣka*) owe their origin to it. Even such usage as *candranirṇik* - like silver (X. 106. 8 cf. *hiranyanirṇik* - like gold - I. 167. 3; V. 62. 7 - and *candrena rathena* IV. 48. 3 cf. *hiranya ratha* - I. 30. 16; IV. 1. 8; V. 57. 1) failed to stir their mind. Only in plural form *candrāṇi* (V. 42. 3) was Sāyaṇa able to come one step closer by admitting it to be *āhlādakāṇi hiranyāṇi*, but even there GRIFFITH is satisfied with 'resplendent treasures'. What had to be understood was that *candrāṇi* is *hiranyāṇi* only in a limited sense as *hiranya* includes all the metals known to the Vedic Āryans and *candrāṇi* in these verses refers to standardized silver chips as *niṣkāṇ* (I. 126. 2) to standardized golden chips. Thus we have crucial evidence to the effect that gold and silver currency was in vogue during the Vedic days which leads us to the conclusion that similar chips of copper, i. e. *pañas*, were also in vogue although the term is missing in *RV* for obvious reason. *Paṇi* has occasionally been used with wide implications in the *RV* but one meaning of *paṇi* was definitely *paisewālā* or the wealthy person: It was used by the Vedic priests as an epithet for those who were not only uncharitable but at the same time staunch materialist, not falling prey to the cunning designs of the priests. They practised usury and as such they were neither as uncertain about their life and wealth nor could depend on gods for realization of their money. On the contrary, appeals for mercy in the name of god by the debtors had to be callously disregarded by them. These were the various reasons why they have invariably been described as uncharitable, cruel, day-reconners, irreligious or *asurvān*,



and unbelievers or *anīndra*, and that is why at times they have been equated with the rocks concealing mineral wealth and not yielding easily without being struck hard. However, these descriptions and various attributes of the *paṇis* lend support to our submission that currency of various denominations including *paṇa* was prevalent in Vedic society.

Whatever be the vices of usury, its prevalence in mercantile circles plays a positive role in the sense that a person with monetary leanings, but deprived of pecuniary resources, could borrow and begin. It is incredible that while others investing their money in commodities were expecting good returns, those who invested their money in needy persons could forego their interest; but scholars who denied existence of money-lending had their compulsions and as such they denied many more things including trade and commerce, navigation and sea, against glaring evidence, as each of these revolted against their love of pastoralism. Existence of lenders and debtors and absolution from debt is attested by more than fifty verses right from the oldest to the latest Books (I. 87. 4; II. 24. 13; III. 2. 1; IV. 3. 13; V. 30. 14; VI. 61. 1; VII. 8. 3; VIII. 32. 16; IX. 110. 1; X. 34. 10).

Partnership in trade is also attested in a large number of verses touching a figure of double century. Even gods are involved in this partnership business either as shareholders or as dispensers of right shares. The term *bhāgadheya* - partner, occurs five times and *bhāga* - share, 48 times. This phenomenon was again reduced to the level of share in booty due to misconception regarding Vedic economy, disregarding the fact that there were dishonest traders or partners, *dhanabhakṣas* (X. 102. 1) as well in the Vedic society.

It appears that the rainy season was the period of suspension of long route trade adventures which were resumed with autumn or *śarad*, as evident from the fact that autumn was considered to be the season favourable to the *Vaiśyas* (*śarad vai vaiśyartuḥ* - *Taitt. Brāhmaṇa* I. 1. 2. 7). This is one reason that they aspired to see hundred autumns, which was again twisted to be reminiscent of the bad old days of colder climates when the forefathers of the 'Aryans' were apprehensive about their survival, and as such they prayed that they may survive hundred winters. In their enthusiasm the advocates of this interesting idea forgot the eagerness with which these men welcomed the

autumn, as expressed in *paśyema śaradaḥ śatām* or *śatām no rāsva śarado vicakṣe* (II. 27. 10) or in yet another verse which speaks of the best and abundant wealth with hundred years (*asme pra yandhi Maghavan Rjṣin Indra rāyo viśvavārasya bhūreḥ. Asme śatām śarado jīvase dhā...* III. 36. 10). We do concede that the mere information that autumn was the season favourable to *Vaiśyas* is not enough to safely infer that the trade ventures started with autumn, but the fact that it was impossible to tour in the rainy season and that even army operations were suspended during rainy season and resumed with the advent of winter, we do not feel extra imaginative in our suggestion.

Trade ventures were risky and there was no guarantee that those who proceeded on long tours would safely return home. So accounts were settled before proceeding on tours. This legacy has come down to this day.

We do not know whether the kings of that time directly participated in overseas commerce or not but name of *Sudās* is definitely associated with a number of ventures. *Sudās* had a vested interest in foreign trade is something which can not be doubted :

- i. *Sudāse dasrā vasu bibhratā rathe prkso vahatamaśvinā*  
*Rayīm samudrāt uta vā divasparyasme dhattam puruṣprham.* I. 47. 6
- ii. *Uto hi vām ratnadheyāni santi purūṇi dyāvā prthivi Sudase.* VII. 53. 3
- iii. *Upa preta kuśikāścetayadhvam aśvam rāye pramuñcatā Sudāsaḥ.* III. 53. 11.

But the most interesting event is the conflict which occurred mid-stream of *Paruṣṇī*, and which has created the impression that it was a great war of the Vedic times. What should have agitated the minds of perceptive scholars is as to why the hymn begins with a theme most suited to traders with an urge for winning wealth which is unmistakable even in translated versions : "(O Indra) like a king among his wives thou dwellest... Make us thy servants, strong for wealth... Hitherward come thy path that leads to riches, may we find shelter in thy favour... Vasiṣṭha hath poured forth his prayers, desiring to milk thee like a cow in goodly pasture" (VII. 18. 2-4); and why was a battle fought midstream, "What though the floods spread widely, Indra made them shallow and easy

for Sudās to traverse. He, worthy of our praises, caused the Śimyu, foe of our hymn, to curse the river's fury". And again the same theme of piracy : "Eager for spoil was Turvaśa Puroḍās, fain to win wealth, like fish urged by hunger... friend rescued friend mid the two distant peoples" (VII. 18. 5-6). In fact, if we read the hymn with an unprejudiced mind, we come to the simple conclusion that it was an encounter with a contending rival in trade who had become jealous of Sudās' hegemony in trade and conspired to ruin him with the help of a few others but, thanks *Indra*, he was saved and in consequence, *Indra* "gave them (*tr̥tsus*) various roads, the path's Controller," or a vast area for operation free from skirmishes.

It was not so easy for an ordinary person to mobilize and organize a trade operation on a scale big enough to negotiate to and fro a foreign country accessible through sea and land routes, and that may be one reason why kings and queens of ancient times took initiative and keen interest in commercial ventures. Even in recent times European kings and queens extended their patronage to pioneers in exploration and trade ventures in Portugal, France and England. So there is nothing to discount the initiative taken by Indian kings in such ventures as was taken by Egyptian heads of State. This could have been one promising source of state revenue when other sources were probably meagre.

We have already mentioned the unique exploit of *Asvins* who had saved *Bhujyu* from a disaster. But *Bhujyu* is not the only person who was thus saved by *Asvins*. In hymn 112 of the first *Maṇḍala* we have passing references to other such events in which *Rebha*, *Vandana*, *Antaka*, *Karkandhu*, *Sucanti*, *Purukutsa*, *Pr̥snigu*, *Parāvṛja*, *Sutarya*, *Kutsa*, *Narya*, *Vaśa*, *Auśija*, *Triśoka*, *Atithigva*, *Divodās*, *Kaśoju*, *Vamra*, *Upastuta*, *Kali*, *Vyaśva*, *Sāyu*, *Atri*, *Manu*, *Paṭharvā*, etc. are stated to have been salvaged from peril in more or less similar circumstances. This again confirms our hypothesis that interstate trade was being conducted on a large scale and with direct or indirect support of kings. As it was not normally possible for a king or a member of the royal family to lead the caravan, representatives of the king, mostly the priests or ministers, had to go on these undertakings. That is why we also find names of some luminaries among the above mentioned besides *Vasiṣṭha*, *Bharadvāja*, *Mādhātā* in the same hymn, who in other hymns are shown to be *ṛ̥ṣis*. In fact we are not in a position to assert whether those who undertook

these ventures and are known to be kings were really heads of royal families or heads of prominent business houses, for none of their exploits is outstanding enough to merit an imperial achievement. Another reason for our hesitation is the relation of the members of a caravan with its leader which, quite often, is reported to be friendly although there is nothing to discount a smooth rapport between a king and eminent members from among his subjects, specially when they were thrown in a situation for such a long time in which aloofness was not easy to maintain.

In any case, the caravan was led by one leader who was *de facto* king as his commands and decisions were binding on all the members of the caravan and was addressed as such. As we have noted that *Manu*, in earlier times, had himself gone on such a mission, we would not be surprised if he had been elected as king in a similar situation and delegated powers to rule and command the caravan, for there are unambiguous references to election of a *rājā* by the members of *viśa* in *R̥gveda* as well (*Ta im viśo na rājānam vṛṇānā bibhatsuvo apa Vṛtrāt atiṣṭhan* - X. 124. 8).

Such an election would have been necessary in cases when the caravan had to move without any acknowledged trade baron and more than one contenders were there to stake their claim for leadership. In some cases, either when the caravan grew big enough to be smoothly managed by one person or when neglecting someone of the two or three contenders could lead to internal rift, more than one leader was elected and that is one reason why there occur references of dual or plural forms of *rājā*. In naval missions *Varuṇa*, i. e. a seasoned and circumspect person having good experience of naval operations had to guide the course and maintain inner discipline while *Indra* or the young and valient leader was elected to thwart possible threats and assaults from robbers and pirates. In case of overland missions, the role of the former was assumed by *Agni* or a person who had widely travelled and was acquainted with the area and routes beside having some proficiency in local dialects. This may be one reason why we find the duos of *Indrāvaruṇa* *Mitrāvaruṇa* on the one hand and *Indrāgni* on the other, and corresponding descriptions of *Indra*'s victory in association with *Angirā* etc., and discovery or creation of routes by *Angirā* and *Indra* respectively. This also, at least partly, explains the association of *ṛ̥ṣis* with these

missions and their wanderings far and wide, and their knowledge of people and places of yonder lands as one aspect of their acknowledged wisdom.

As the nature of Vedic economy was partly misunderstood by traditional scholars due to subdued position of merchants in later times and a bias in favour of the two higher castes which was brought to its logical conclusion by the colonial 'wisdom' and its inheritance by 'disciplined' scholars, even the key words like *vis*, *carṣaṇi*, *rāṣṭra*, *saṁiti*, *grāma*, *rājā*, *ṛṣi*, *pur*, *prajā* and the various synonyms of trade ventures including the role of prominent gods like *Varuṇa*, *Indra*, *Agni* was grossly misunderstood. It was natural that the election of the leader of the caravan also misunderstood as election of kings or chiefs in the face of glaring evidence that kingship had become hereditary as noted by some scholars. (MACDONELL and KEITH, *Vedic Index*).

It was the caravan itself which was variously called *sangatha*, *grāma*, *rāṣṭra*, *viś*, *carṣaṇi* and *prajā* in relation to the leader of the caravan or *rājā* stood for the traders including their servants as evident in a graphic description of a convoy (*Pibata ca tṛṣṇutam cā ca gacchataṁ prajāṁ ca dhattam draviṇam ca dhattam*. VIII.35.10ff.) We do not know whether these nomenclatures depended on size of the caravan or not, nor it is our point that these terms were not used in wider sense. However, the leader was not only addressed as *rājā* but also as *viśpati* (I. 37. 8), *grāma-ṇi* (X. 107. 5), *carṣaṇidhṛt* (IV. 17. 20) and as we see in case of *Varuṇa* frequently, as *saṁrāt*.

Except the leader whose dominant position is obvious in a number of verses addressed to *Indra* or *Varuṇa*, the members of the caravan enjoyed equal status. No one among them was *jyeṣṭha*, *kaniṣṭha* or *madhyama* as reflected in the status of *Maruts* (V. 59. 6; 60. 5). Preference was given to young and hardy persons as others could hardly bear the strain of journey. All the members had their complete equipage to meet every eventuality. Except for the goods for sale, the caravan had many points of resemblance with a military operation. But a troop of merchants with cargo and cattle outbalancing the men at arms, they ever remained vulnerable to sudden assault of the gangs of robbers and pirates who could also choose the opportune moment and point of attack. The protecting power of gods and their exemplary valour do

not imply corresponding aggressiveness of the troop but its constant fear and apprehension :

*Svasti pantham anucarema sūryācandramasāviva.*  
*Punardadatā aghnatā jānatā saṁgamemahi.* V. 51. 15

(May we tread our path beneficently as sun and moon. May we go in company uninjured knowing well as to who is to give (something) in return).

*Urau devā anibādhe syāma.* V. 42. 17.

(May, O Gods, we be in open area free from disturbance.)

*Yata Indra Bhayāmahe tato no abhayam kṛidhi.*  
*Maghavañcchagdhī tava tanna ūtibhirvidiṣo vi mṛdho jahi.*  
VIII. 61. 13

(Free us, O Indra, from fear of those whom we fear. Help us O Maghavan, extend your protection for which you are known, drive away foes and enemies.)

*Mā no arātirīṣata Devasya martasya ca. Parṣi tasyā uta dviṣaḥ.* II. 7. 2

(May not the enemies of gods or men overpower us. Save us from both of them.)

*Bṛhaspatir naḥ paripātu paścād utottarasṁd adharād aghāyoh.*

*Indraḥ purastād uta madhyato naḥ sakhā sakhibhyaḥ varivaḥ kṛnotu.* X. 42. 11

(Bṛhaspati protect us from the rear and from above, and from below, from sinners! May Indra protect from front, and from the centre, as friend to friends, vouchsafe us room and freedom.)

They tried to keep their morale up through auto-suggestions :

*Sakhye ta Indra vājino mā bhema śavasaspatē.*

*Tvāmabhi pra ṇonumo jetāramaparājitam.* I. 11.2.

(We with our goods may not fear, O Lord of power, Indra, so long you are on our side. O invincible victor, we completely entrust ourselves to your care. cf. GRIFFITH, also Sāyaṇa.)

*Mā bhema mā śramiṣmo ugrasya sakhye tava.* VIII. 4. 7

(With thee on our side, O Mighty one, may we not fear nor get tired.)

In one word, they were neither war-mongers, nor audacious in nature but meek and humble and they tried their best to

avoid contact with their foes. They prayed 'Save your votaries, O Lord, from the contact of oppressive enemies (*druho riṣaḥ sampricāḥ pāhi sūrin* - II. 35. 6). We may go on piling hundreds of verses, nay, thousands, for what are all the hymns singing to the glory and valour of *Indra* but indirect admission of the inability of the votaries to defend themselves in certain circumstances.

But had they been as coward as they appear to be in their prayers, they would not stir out of their houses. They only try to avoid loss and damage to life and property, through prayers, *sānti pāthas*, satiation and invocation of all the powers to be salutary and amicable, but when forced to defend themselves, they fight with all their might and ferocity. What is *Indra*, after all, but an awe-inspiring oppressor who conducts the robbers as he wills (*Indro viśvasya damitā vibhīṣaṇaḥ yathāvaśam nayati dāsamāryāḥ* - V. 34. 6). If we recall the name of *Trasadasyu* (cf. *Śakāri Vikramāditya*) we may understand, whom *Indra* oppressed and why.

However they had to move cautiously in day and keep alert in the night when they burnt fire to keep thieves, reptiles and wild animals off. They had a disturbed sleep after day's tiredness in the course of their journey. (*Aswapnajastaraṇayāḥ suśevā atandrāso avrikā asramiṣṭhāḥ* - IV. 4. 12, "Knowing no slumber, speedy and propitious, alert and ever friendly, most unwearied, May thy protecting powers unerring *Agni*, taking their places here, combined, preserve."). It is not for nothing that they compare their enemies with snakes and wolves.

Although the *Rgveda* is full of vague references to caravans, there are only few which throw some light on the size and formation of it. Mules, donkeys, ponies and camels appear to have been used for transportation of goods, but in case of places accessible by cartworthy roads, we may presume that camel, mule and bullock driven carts were used for carriage. Horses could have been there but only few and only for the leaders and defenders. The terms *aśva* and *atya* signify fastness of speed and *vāji*, *hari*, *haryat*, *haya*, *dadhikra* etc. ability to carry, out of which *vāji* is more eloquent. At an early stage, these animals must have been the only means for transportation of goods to a reasonably long distance, but their carriage capacity was limited and that is why search for some mechanical device started and wheel was invented and improved to increase the carriage capacity of the animals, and journeys to far distant places

were made feasible. From the oldest sections of the *Rgveda* we find cars and wagons with twelve-spoked-wheels being widely used, and so we have reason to believe and evidence to fortify that carts and wagons were the prime mode of transportation of goods. In certain cases men, most of whom must have been moving on foot or on the back of any of the above animals, could also use the wagons for riding. We know that the term *aśva* with its various synonyms did not exclude donkey and mule, and originally were used for donkey only. At a stage when even *Aśvins* had donkey to mount on and that donkey could outsmart thousands of others going on the same trade mission (I. 116. 2), it is never safe to conclude that Vedic Aryans were horse-riding people and all the references of *aśva* stand for horse.

On the other, where we have references of one thousand horses yoked to the car of *Indra*, we feel that this seemingly patent exaggeration is not far removed from the truth. On the one hand it refers to *Indra* as Sun with its rays and on the other the leader of the caravan, with the caravan as a whole conceived as a long chariot. But since the animals were less sturdy, roads were rough and destinations far distant, more than one stallion was needed to gain speed and so, like dogs in a sledge, in some cases more than two or three mules or donkeys might have been harnessed in one car. There is no other animal to match the self-servicing donkey, whose number did not pose any problem of grain or fodder, so long grazing grounds were available around the camping sites.

It was war-and booty-theory-obsession which made the rendering of many of the hymns associated with caravans highly incoherent. The three hymns addressed to *Dadhikras* (IV. 38-40) are among them. Earlier we were led to the good belief that at least *dadhikras* might refer to horses of very fine breed as these have been separately adulated, and shown to be sons of *Sūrya* and also as one possible interpretation of the term was 'one who can take a jump with the rider'. Now on better grounds we feel the other interpretation '*dadhat krandatīti*' or 'the one which cries and brays' is more appropriate, as it is in line with *rāsabha* and *gardabha*. Its mating season is June or the hottest period of our region and that is why it has been described as the son of Lord *Sun* and *Angiras* (IV. 40. 1) and praised as personified *Agni*. This is further confirmed by its loud braying which terrifies the 'enemies' (IV. 38. 8) and its love for dust (*reṇum rerihat* - IV. 38. 6) or *adhi bhruvoḥ kirate reṇu rījan* - (V. 38. 7)



For us, its breed is not as important as its role in social prosperity and certain features of a caravan which figure in these hymns. As the roads were muddy and traffic was frequent on the main road, there used to be deep wheel marks all along the road which were filled with dust. When the caravan moved, the dust raised by the wheels of carts and hoofs of animals smeared the face of the animals and, understandably, of the merchants and their men. The train of cars from a distance looked like a garland being wreathed by someone (IV. 38. 6-7). The round number of thousand (*parā dadhikrā asarat sahasraiḥ* - (IV. 38. 9; *yuktā hi asya harayaḥ śatā daśa* VI. 47. 18) indicates that the convoy should have been impressive as was required to thwart the possible attempts of robbers. As journey beyond north-western ranges was called *devayāna* and traders, *devas* in contrast to ordinary men, *manuṣyas* or *martyas*, some interesting stanzas occur in other contexts with an aim at pun, so the references of caravan have not been properly understood (*Ehayātam pathibhir devayānair vidyāmeṣam vrjanam jīradānum* - I. 183. 6; *Hansā iva śreṇīṣaḥ yatānā sukṛā vasānāḥ svaravo na āguḥ. Unnīyamānāḥ kavibhiḥ purastāt devā devānām api yanti pāthah* - III. 8. 9)

As the region beyond north-west frontiers was believed to be *Devaloka*, *Gandharvaloka* and *Svar-loka*, we feel inclined to suggest that it was this area with which trade contact was first established, so far as 'foreign' trade was concerned, and the initiative appears to have been taken from the east. The montaneous area was not cartworthy; so mules, donkeys and ponies appear to have been the only means of transport in their case even after the introduction of wheel and wagon. Only faint references (*asamāne adhvani vrjine pathi* - VI. 46. 13; *Āpathayaḥ vipathayaḥ antaspathā anupathāḥ* - V. 52. 10; *Agavyūtiḥ kṣetra aganma devā urvī satī bhūmī ramhūraṇābhūt* - VI. 47. 20, giving some idea of the vast but rugged terrain, and creation of new routes of removing some obstacles as in references of Angira, breaking rocks and mining out the wealth hidden in caves) and chance mention of a few rivers of Afghanistan which flow into Indus can be cited in this connection.

Exploits of Indra are mainly connected with this area, whereas those of Varuṇa concern the sea voyage. This distinction of roles is neither very neat nor maintained uniformly. For instance it is Indra who is remembered as savior of Turvasu and Yadu, but the calamity which had befallen them appears to have taken place in the course of a voyage (*Pra yat samudram atī śūra paṇṣi pārayā Turvaśam*

*Yadum swasti* I. 174. 9). He is not only praised for his divine role of creating rivers, as water channels (I. 32. 12) but also for removing the obstacles created by robbers (I. 32. 9-11 II. 11. 9). The votaries of Indra pray, "May he, the saviour much invoked, may Indra bear us in ship, / Safely beyond all enemies." (VIII. 16. 11) and we find that his role is limited to provision of material aid and physical safety while role of Varuṇa is primarily limited to safe conduct of the boats through waterways although he is also shown as a very strict disciplinarian. We have to witness juxtaposition of land and sea in a number of verses. They appear to be connected with the same activity. So wealth from mountains and sea (*rayim samudrāt uta vā divaspary asme* - I. 47. 6; cf. VIII. 18. 16; 31. 10) and often wealth of all sorts are desired in the same stanza, in one breath. We can very well appreciate the compulsions which forced commentators to interpret both *parvata* and *samudra* as cloud even in contexts crying for plain meaning. They only failed to grasp the magnitude of trading activities.

References to navigation are more pronounced and the purpose of journeys is unmistakable (*Samudram na sañcaraṇe sanisyavaḥ* - I. 52. 2; *Rathāya nāvamuta no gṛhāya nityārītrām padvatī rāsyagne. Asmākaṁ virān uta no maghono janānsca yā pārayāccharma yā ca* I. 140. 12; *Ye asyā ācaraṇeṣu dadhrīre samudre na śravyasyavaḥ* - I. 48. 3)

Varuṇa has been cast in the image of a seasoned navigator. "He knows the path of birds that fly through heaven, and, sovereign of the sea/ He knows the ships that are thereon. True to his holy law, he knows the twelve moon with their progeny/ He knows the moon of later birth. He knows the pathway of the wind, the spreading, high, and mighty wind/ He knows the Gods who dwell above." (I. 25. 7-9) There are certain incongruities in GRIFFITH's rendering. For instance, he fails to grasp the stanza which refers to adjustment of lunar months with the solar ones and the additional month which falls every fifth year; but that is a minor point. These three verses do not give any admirable account of Varuṇa's wisdom as they refer to common-place things. But if we look at the problems of navigation during the days when mechanical aids had not been developed to determine the air pressure, and direction in case of distraction from sea shore deep into the sea, when determination of the direction and distance from the coast became a matter of life and death for the inmates of the ship, we may easily grasp the minute observation needed and acquired by the

captain of the ship even through these understatements. Whereas *veda nāvah samudriyah* implies minute understanding, examination and maintenance of ship before launching on and in the course of journey besides navigational abilities, *Vedā yo vīnām padam antarikṣeṇa patatām* implies detection of the direction and distance from coastline by releasing birds, such as crows whose move, hesitation, return or disappearance in a given direction gave volumes of information so urgently needed. In the last two hymns of second *Maṇḍala* we find confirmation of this fact in which crow named as *śakunta* (even today perching of a crow and its cry is supposed to be an omen for the arrival of some dear one, which is a reminiscent of the old observation of the family members of the sailors and merchants) is praised. Some of the phrases (*Kanikradat januṣām prabruvānam iyarti vācamariteva nāvam* - II. 42. 1; *Pitryāmanu pradiṣam kanikradat ... ava kranda dakṣiṇato grhāṇām ... brhad vadema vidathe suvirāḥ* II. 42. 2 & 3) which indicate its relation with the sailors and direction of its flight as well as anxiety of the members at home. Study of starry world for determination of time and direction in the night is indicated in the knowledge of Gods above and *Veda vātasya vartanim* had far wider implications in terms of air pressure, direction and possible change in the course of winds including feasibility otherwise of using sail. In short it gives a good account of the advances made in the field of navigation.

Elsewhere also, *Varuṇa* is shown as a naval chief (*Ācaṣṭa āsām pātho nadīnām* - VII. 34. 10, i. e. he keeps his vigilant eyes on the waterways; *Rājā rāṣṭrānām peṣo nadīnām* - VII. 234. 11 : "Lord of convoyages and glory of rivers" which in GRIFFITH's version reads as "King of kings, the glory of floods". We can understand translation of the first half but not the rendering of *nadīnām* as floods; *Ā yad ruhāva Varuṇasya nāvam pra yat samudramitrayāsa madhyam* - VII. 88. 3, "When Varuṇa and I embark together and urge our boat in the midst of ocean." etc.)

It is interesting that not only sea but islands in it have also been mentioned (I. 169. 3; VIII. 20. 4) in the *Rgveda*. Use of pearls (*kṛṣṇa* - I. 35. 4; 126. 4; VII. 18. 23; X. 68. 11) reveals one additional dimension of diving and islands accessible through the sea. We have seen that coins of sorts of various metals and denominations—*niṣka*, *candra*, *rajata*, *paṇa*—were in currency in the Vedic period. Now we

may safely add *cowrie* as the last fraction having some value which we can not determine.

As we have already stated, both land and water routes were unsafe due to robbers, pirates and thieves lurking for easy gains. Most of the conflicts mentioned in the *Rgveda* relate to these journeys. Nature and locale of these confrontations, a few of which occurred between two rival groups of traders (*Yam krandat samyati vihwayete pare avaru ubhayā amitrah. Samānam cit ratham ātasthivānsā nānā havete sa janāsa Indraḥ*. II. 12. 8) and that is why *Indra* is credited with having slain both the *dāsas* and *Āryas* on a few occasions.

Scholars have been complaining that a large number of *Rgvedic* verses have been a dead letter to them. We may add that even those verses which they thought they understood, were also only partly understood because of an erroneous approach regarding Vedic social and economic life and civilization as a whole. If you try to encompass an ocean in a flood in one verse and nervously admit ocean in another, if you resort to war-and-booty thesis at one place and in another you are forced to acknowledge merchantile operations, if you find most of the verses childish to the extreme and admit in the next breath that there are others which are highly mystic and philosophical, you may better take care of your knowledge and wisdom and the text and culture reflected in it. One can use his authority on living people and feel happy but an attempt to despoil the dead of their due dignity and credit is not only heinous but also counter productive. Scholars are themselves responsible for their predicaments, not the *Rgveda* in the least. The translated versions on which most of our present day scholars depend are only ravages of the original text and we hope nothing from those who cling fast to the spoiled texts. A new effort must be made to get a correct translation of the *Rgveda* free from high cast prejudices and colonial biases with a sense of history and no-nonsense of revivalistic undertones.

When we try to bracket *Rgvedic* civilization in time and place, we have no other material and level of achievement but the Harappan one. We have deliberately avoided comparison between the two in order to maintain parity of our discussion, but one can hardly get rid of the question mark which raises its big head time and again.

## REFERENCES

1. Indra is not only *maghavā* - the rich one, *maghavantam* - the richest one, but according to AV. III. 15 he is a *vanik*, engaged in mercantile transactions, i. e. *prapaṇa* and aspiring to prosper through the deals, *dhanena devā dhanmicchamānah*.
2. There should be no confusion in case of the Maruts, who have uniformly been explained as *vis* in Vedic exegeses.
3. *Rgbhyaḥ jātam vaiśyam varṇam āhuḥ* TS. III. 12. 9. 2
4. The very term *Ārya* signifies cultured, civilised, noble; let alone their aspirations as manifest in *kṛāṇvnto viIvamāryam...* IX. 63. 5, etc.
5. *Kṛṣṇayoni*, which is synonymous with *tamovṛdha*, *tama* or those who become powerful in the darkness of night (cf. *Kṛṣṇayoni*, *durit*) was interpreted as people belonging to a black race in contrast with the *Āryans* and *anās*.

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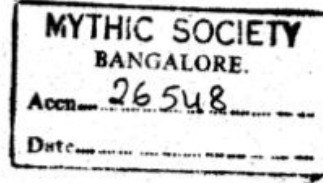
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